



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

May 19, 2011

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
US Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20530

RE: George's Chicken, Harrisonburg, VA

Dear Attorney General Holder:

We write in regard to the recent sale of the Tyson Foods processing facility in Harrisonburg, Virginia to George's, Inc. and the challenge to that sale by the Department of Justice, now pending in United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. Now that the issue has been joined, the court will determine the merits of the case. As this case moves toward resolution and key decisions are made by your Department, we ask that you bear in mind the 500 people who work at the George's plant in Harrisonburg, and the 121 farmers who sell birds for processing in that plant. A legal victory that leads to a shuttered plant would be no victory for these workers, and would do little to support your Department's legitimate role in safeguarding competition in the marketplace.

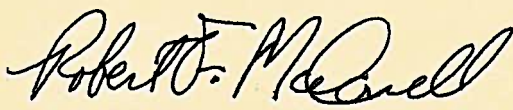
Here in Virginia, agriculture remains the largest contributor to our state's economy, surpassing any other sector with an annual economic impact of \$55 billion and employing one in ten of our citizens, either directly on the farm or further out in the stream of commerce. The largest subsector of our agricultural economy is the state's poultry industry, consisting primarily of poultry integrators and the small farmers who make their livelihoods as contract growers for companies like Tyson Foods, George's, and others. These companies and their employees are integral to our state's economic sustainability, and nowhere in Virginia is that more true than in the Shenandoah Valley where, in many communities, the poultry industry is the largest employer.

That is why this facility in Harrisonburg is of such concern to us. Harrisonburg and the surrounding communities cannot sustain the blow to the local workforce and the local economy that a closure would bring. The decision by the new owner, George's, not only to retain the former Tyson's employees, but also to extend its growers' contracts through 2018 would have no effect if George's were forced to withdraw, nor would George's have the opportunity to carry out the increased expansion it has promised.

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Although we sincerely regret the loss of Tyson Food's presence in Harrisonburg, we believe that every effort should be made to avoid a closure of the facility to preserve the over 500 jobs as well as the livelihoods of the 121 farmers who have contracts to sell birds for processing there. For these reasons, we respectfully request that you consider the impact of your decisions as this process moves forward and that you actively seek a resolution that will ensure that this important facility in Harrisonburg can continue contributing jobs and revenue to the local economy. Please do not hesitate to contact any of our offices with questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Robert F. McDonnell
Governor of Virginia



James H. Webb, Jr.
Senator for Virginia



Mark R. Warner
Senator for Virginia



Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress